George's PINK PAGES July 2000

EAS Master Beekeeper Creator and Founder Dead

Dr. Roger Morse, age 72, died in his sleep on May 12th. Cornell University awarded him a Bachelor's degree in 1950, his Master's in 1953, and his doctorate in 1955. In 1958, he went to work as an assistant professor in the Department of Entomology, later promoted to associate professor and then professor, and served as Chairman of the Department from 1986-89. He was honored as a visiting professor by universities in Brazil, Finland, and the Philippines.

Roger had that ability of communication with the "common man", understanding the problems and questions of oftentimes "blue collar" beekeepers and replying to them in words and examples that was very understandable. In this regard, he introduced the science of beekeeping to the practice of beekeeping. Morse is perhaps best known for his many writings, all concerned about the betterment of beekeeping as scientific research continued to open new knowledge about apis mellifera. His writings are far too numerous to mention here.

Back in the 1970's, Roger was concerned about HOW to get beekeeping knowledge out to the beekeepers who had learned the basics from their fathers or grandfathers and simply could not afford the time or cost to attend college instruction. In addition, Roger knew very well that many of the beekeeping practices of the day were just carryovers from previous years and really outdated. Hence, at Cornell University and basically utilizing only New York State beekeepers, he created the original Master Beekeeping program. His idea was that he would certify some individual that had proven by passing difficult tests on all phases of beekeeping to be a MASTER BEEKEEPER; and this person could then teach responsible beekeeping techniques to beekeepers in his geographic location in New York State. This program became so popular and successful with New York beekeepers, Roger offered the program to EAS so that EAS could spread the idea throughout its coverage of 20+ Eastern States and five Canadian provinces. EAS assumed the leadership in the MASTER BEEKEEPER program in 1981, and the first two people to be CERTIFIED were my own Bee Partner, Ann Harman, and Maryland's Ernie Miner, both of which are members of our Montgomery County Beekeepers Association. Now 20 years later, there are a total of 130 EAS CERTIFIED MASTER BEEKEEPERS in the world (even from Alaska and Nevada) and there are NINE who are members of our MCBA.

Because of my personal interest in teaching responsible beekeeping and trying to upgrade the many beeHAVERS to beeKEEPERS, I will miss Roger a great deal. Whether he was in New York or wintering in Florida, he was always available to me if I had a question. Roger was a MAN among many, and he will be sorely missed.

George Imirie - EAS Master Beekeeper